

## **Chapter 6**

### **The Farm Repurchased, Restored and Made Public**

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#### **Introduction**

This chapter traces the farmhouse from the time friends of Harry Truman purchased the property from Jackson County, who had foreclosed the mortgage, restored it, conveyed it back to the county, and, finally the county's conveyance to the United States Government.

The Truman family's continuing association with the land even after foreclosure, the formation of a private foundation to acquire and restore the farmhouse, attempts to locate the presidential library at the farm, and the struggles by both the foundation and the county to meet the financial obligations in maintaining the property are presented.

#### **Repurchasing the Truman Farm**

On February 24, 1945, the County Court sold the Grandview Farm for \$43,500.<sup>207</sup> According to Charles F. Curry, a friend of Harry S Truman who participated in the repurchase of the farm from the county, the sale was not widely advertised. Some of Truman's friends felt that the sale price would not be sufficient to retire the approximately \$43,000 of outstanding indebtedness. Curry discussed the matter with Vivian Truman, who expressed a family desire that Martha Truman be permitted to live in the farmhouse and the eighty-seven acres it occupied. Vivian told Curry that the Truman family could raise approximately \$20,000. They agreed that Curry and his friends would purchase the entire farm (approximately 287 acres), and sell the farmhouse and its acreage to the Trumans for \$20,000.

Curry was able to recruit two others, E. Kemper Carter and Tom Evans. The three submitted a sealed bid that was opened by the County Court on March 9, 1945. Curry, Carter, and Evans were the successful bidders at a price of \$43,000. The terms of the sale were that a \$10,000 deposit had to accompany the bid, \$20,000 in cash was due upon delivery of the deed, and a note for \$13,000 was to be agreed to. The \$13,000 note was secured by a first deed of trust pertaining only to the 200-acre tract (not pertaining to the 87 acres upon which the farmhouse was situated). The three took title in the name of Curry's bookkeeper, E. G. Huston, who executed a memorandum stating that she held title for E. Kemper Carter for one-sixth interest, for Tom Evans for one-sixth interest, and Curry for four-sixths

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<sup>207</sup> Ben Nordbert, Clerk, County Court of Jackson County, Memorandum to the file, June 27, 1957. Vertical File: Truman, Home, Grandview. Harry S. Truman Library.

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interest. On May 4, 1946, they resold the farm to Harry S Truman.<sup>208</sup> For legal reasons, Curry executed a quit claim deed and E. G. Huston, his bookkeeper, executed a warranty deed. (Fee simple title was vested in E. G. Huston by virtue of its transfer by the Jackson County Court; however, Curry's interest, which was conveyed by his quit claim deed, arose by virtue of the memorandum executed by E. G. Huston that provided that she held title only as agent for Curry.)<sup>209</sup>

#### **Attempt to Build the Harry S. Truman Library at the Grandview Farm**

On June 26, 1950, Truman contacted Edward F. Neild, an architect with the firm of Neild-Somdal Associates, and asked him to prepare preliminary plans for the Truman presidential library. Truman wanted the library to be located on the farm. A December 20, 1952, press release announced that a presidential library was being planned for construction at the Grandview farm site, and construction was scheduled to start in 1953. The planned library was expected to cost one million dollars. A group calling themselves Friends of the President incorporated under the name Harry S. Truman Library, Inc. They solicited contributions and raised approximately \$200,000.<sup>210</sup> A typescript of a draft article written by Harry Truman casts some light on the thinking behind locating the library at the Grandview farm:

The property lies on your left, 600 acres of it. 400-odd belong to me, the rest to my brother, Vivian and my sister Mary. Vivian and two of his sons, Gilbert and Harry, work the place today, and it's a going concern, planted to alfalfa, wheat, corn and oats, with grazing land for horses and ponies and 130 head of good cattle . . .

The reason for mentioning all this is that here is where I'd like to merge the past and the future — and by the future I mean the Harry S. Truman Library. It will be located here in Grandview, as soon as the fund drive, now going on, is finished. I'm giving the land, 60, 80, or as many acres as are needed, and the funds for the building are being raised by subscription. The land is valuable enough — in the present market it's worth between \$1,000 and

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<sup>208</sup> Charles F. Curry, interviewed by James R. Fuchs, 30 September, 1965, transcript of taped interview, 13, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>209</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman: A Life*, (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1994), 107.

<sup>210</sup> *U.S. News & World Report*, 22 September 1952.

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\$1,250 an acre — but the most valuable thing I have to give is the collection of papers I accumulated as President. Cached now in 400 5-drawer filing cabinets, these papers are the reason for the library. Of the 400, 219 contain top secret material, which can't be made public for some time. All together, they constitute in rough form a history of the 8 years I was in office.

Messages, received and sent, random jottings, letters, memos and so on, they tell their own intimate story of one of the most unusual periods in our career as a nation, the period from the explosion of the first atomic boomb [sic] to the conflict in Korea. No student of history, politics, sociology, or almost any major subject can afford to ignore them. That's why I want to make them available to students.

Meanwhile, the disposition and security of the papers have been my chief worries. Over a year ago, I discussed the matter with a group of advisers in the White House. The use of some vaults in the Fidelity Building in Kansas City had been offered as storage space, pro tem, and I was inclined to accept. Then Judge Samuel I. Rosenman pointed out that the vaults were federal property and that, if the papers were placed there, my successor in office would have the legal right to bar me from access to them — though the chance of his doing so was slight. Even so, I had trouble sleeping that night, just at the mere idea.

Next day, I asked my brother Vivian and Tom Evans, one of my old friends, to look for some other temporary cache, in or around Kansas City. They finally reported that there was room in the Jackson County courthouse. Two floors, still unused and unfinished, were available.

The Grandview farm seems to me to be the ideal site for the proposed library. Usually, in explaining why, I take a map and draw a circle, with a radius of 500 miles around Grandview. There are 81 (83?) colleges and other institutions of learning within the circle. None of them, at present, is a center of historical study or contains a collection of papers similar to mine. In other words, the library will be within easy reach of countless students, who now have no access to the sort of material it will hold.

But students won't be the only ones admitted. It will be open to the general public, too, and in this respect, as a

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tourist attraction, its central location in the nation and those good roads I mentioned earlier are prime assets. It should be worth a casual visit, as well as a prolonged one, for study purposes, because, if the architects' plans are realized, the building itself will be beautiful; also, the idea is to fill the exhibition rooms with many mementos of my years as president, including a lot of gifts I received from rulers and leaders all over the world.

I don't want to sound a funeral note, but people sometimes ask me the question, so I may as well answer it now. I want to be buried here in Grandview, where I belong, in a vault under or near the library, and I'd like to have my closest relatives placed beside me — after they're dead, of course.

Some day, after the library is built, I think I'll move mother's house back a ways and build myself a home in front of it. [I]t would be nice. Come to think of it, it would be the first home of my own, the first I myself built and live in, I've ever had in my life.<sup>211</sup>

However, on July 8, 1954, a different site was selected. Truman and the presidential library planners considered transportation, lodging, and other logistics and concluded that an Independence, Missouri, location would better serve public needs, and would be closer to Truman's own home on North Delaware Street.<sup>212</sup>

Financial considerations also persuaded Harry Truman not to have a presidential library constructed on the Grandview Farm. Truman had a long personal history of debt, and his presidential salary never made him wealthy. After he left office there was no pension for former presidents until 1958. Income and some security only came from the contract to write and the expected sale of his autobiography, *Memoirs* (although the financial return turned out to be less than expected). The sale of his share of several hundred acres of the Truman farm in Grandview also provided financial security at last for Truman, as well as Mary Jane and Vivian.

In 1958, three years after Harry and Gilbert Truman had moved to Kansas, over two hundred acres of the Truman Farm was sold to B. F. Weinberg and Associates. B. F. Weinberg, doing business as Triangle Investments, announced that they would

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<sup>211</sup> Harry S. Truman, Draft Article, Post-Presidential File: American Weekly, work papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>212</sup> Jill York O'Bright, "Cultivating the Land: Cultivating the Man: The Young-Truman Farm," *Jackson County Historical Society* 26: 2 (Fall 1984).

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transform the farmland into a shopping center and residential subdivision. The 220 acres were sold for \$1,000 an acre.

Had it not been for the fact that I was able to sell some property that my brother, sister, and I inherited from our mother," Truman wrote to John McCormich in January of 1957, "I would practically be on relief, but with the sale of that property I am not financially embarrassed."<sup>213</sup>

In the early 1970s, while conducting research for his book *Plain Speaking*, Merle Miller accompanied Mary Jane Truman out to the old farm:

One sunny summer afternoon Miss Mary Jane and I were standing on the tiny plot of land that was all that was left of the Truman home place at Grandview.

Most of the land had been turned into a neon-lighted shopping center that, naturally, is called Truman Corners. It was dominated by a large electric cat over a drugstore. The cat had malevolent brown eyes that lighted up at night, and it revolved endlessly behind the old barn in which Mary Jane, Vivian, and Harry used to play.

As Miss Truman and I stood in the field near the barn, the cat eyed us menacingly. An old C-47 groaned overhead, and there were the sounds and smells of trucks on their way to the grime and smog of downtown Kansas City. A voice on a loudspeaker shouted out a then-popular rock-and-roll song, and there was the competing noise of a disc jockey from the radio in a TV appliance store.

Miss Mary Jane listened for a moment. "It used to be so quiet," she said, "and you could plow the north eighty without taking the plow out of the ground. It's all changed so much." She looked around again. "Well," she said, "That's progress. At least they say it is."<sup>214</sup>

#### **Jackson County Acquisition of the Truman Farm**

The Trumans continued to sell small pieces of the farm until only a twenty-acre parcel containing the farmhouse remained. The house began to fall into disrepair during the Williams's family tenure there as renter, beginning in 1956. The last of the maples planted by Solomon Young were blown down by

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<sup>213</sup> Ferrell, *Off the Record*, 346.

<sup>214</sup> Merle Miller, *Plain Speaking: An Oral Biography of Harry S Truman* (New York: Berkley Publishing Co., 1973), 50-51.

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a tornado in 1957.<sup>215</sup> In 1966 the larger barn, which had been built by Solomon Young in 1867-68, and had been used by three generations, was destroyed by fire.

The first recorded official attempt to restore and preserve the farmhouse occurred in September of 1965, when Clarence McGill, a real estate broker acting on behalf of Gilbert and Harry Truman, who then owned the property, indicated that both Gilbert and Harry were interested in conveying the property to an organization that would preserve it. The asking price at that time was \$200,000. Jackson County officials were unable to purchase the property due to budget limitations. The Director of the National Park Service, George B. Hartzog, Jr. was then approached in December of 1965. In accordance with President Truman's expressed wishes, the NPS voiced a reluctance to do anything during Truman's life to commemorate him.



**Truman farmhouse on the market.**

Photo courtesy of the *Jackson County Advocate*

### **Truman Farm Home Foundation Is Formed**

The issue was resurrected in 1976. A group of Grandview Chamber of Commerce members initiated a fund drive to buy the home. They only raised \$4,000, not enough to purchase the home, so the donations were returned. However, the group was able to have the farm home listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. In late 1978, members of the Grandview Chamber of Commerce and the Grandview City Council incorporated a foundation to purchase and restore the farm home. The foundation, called the Harry S. Truman Farm Home Foundation, became active in early 1980.<sup>216</sup>

The foundation was comprised of individual residents of Grandview, Missouri, motivated by a desire to preserve a piece of

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<sup>215</sup> Ferrell, *A Life*, 111.

<sup>216</sup> *Kansas City Times*, 12 December 1978.

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local history. The foundation was a true grass roots movement; it was not by a state, federal, or local agency. As is appropriate to the man whose memory they sought to preserve, the foundation was formed simply by private citizens of a rural town. And, they succeeded.

They orchestrated the purchase of the remaining Truman property by Jackson County. Working through the Jackson County Legislature, they were able to obtain a \$378,250 grant from the Department of the Interior, which was used to purchase the land. The Trumans agreed to sell the property to Jackson County for half of its \$700,000 appraised value. By September of 1983, the county owned the property and the foundation had raised enough money to start the renovation. Just before the Truman Centennial in 1984 (celebrating Truman's date of birth), the foundation also assisted National Park Service regional historian, Jill York (later O'Bright) in preparing the national historic landmark nomination for the Young-Truman Grandview Farm. The national historic landmark status later became critical to adding the farm to the federal park system, centered on the Truman home in Independence.<sup>217</sup>

Sterling Goddard was president of the foundation. As had been the case for Truman, Goddard's presidency was thrust upon him. Although he was instrumental in the incorporation of the foundation, he was unable to attend the first meeting. In his absence, his friends elected him president.

Sterling reported that the foundation raised over a million dollars. They conducted a massive direct-mail campaign. Letters went to former friends and associates of Harry Truman seeking private contributions; letters went to state and federal agencies seeking grants. The Department of the Interior's grant of \$378,250 came in late October of 1980. Secretary of the Interior, Cecil D. Andrus, presented the check to the Missouri governor. The foundation also had a benefit show at the high school; country singer Hank Snow and his son came. And many individuals contributed. Over twenty years later, Sterling was still amazed by the foundation's success: "And many of the

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<sup>217</sup> Members of the Harry S Truman Farm Home Foundation as of May 3, 1984 were: Foundation Officers: Sterling E. Goddard, President, Laroy Gann, Vice President, Robert M Garrison, Treasurer, Dennis H. Flanery, Secretary. Board Members were: John J. Strode, Vince Harrison, Rufus Burris, Ralph Hedges, Sam Lickteig, Marguerite Maxwell, Robert McCarthy, Bill Reno, James D. Turnbaugh, Jr., Dr. Benedict Zobrist, Charles Curry, Robert F. Hoesfer, Weldon Jackson, Barry Wilkinson, Doug Doll, William C. Hussey, Bob Johnson, Bill Waris, George Lehr, Ed Thompson, Nancy Pope, and George Fogelsong. The Consulting Architect was John Huffman, the foundation attorney was John O'Malley, and the Consulting Engineer was Dave Dyhouse. *Jackson County Advocate*, 3 May 1984. It is impressive that the same persons were still on the board on October 6, 1993. Historian's Files: Truman Farm Foundation, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.



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politicians and others that were all friends of Harry's they made – made contributions," he said during the June, 1999, interview. "And we raised over a million dollars." He paused for a moment, gazing into his backyard through the glass patio door. "My goodness. That's amazing," he said mostly to himself.<sup>218</sup>

Both Sterling and Joyce Goddard were careful to name others responsible for the foundation's success. A name that the Goddards emphasized is heard whenever knowledgeable people discuss the farmhouse renovation: George Foglesong, the retired carpenter who did the actual restoration work at no charge. George Foglesong advised the foundation that he owed a personal favor to Harry Truman and wanted to do the work, but wouldn't take money for it.<sup>219</sup> Foglesong had retired four years earlier. Foglesong was born in Ottawa, Kansas, moved to Emporia, Kansas, as a child, and was first exposed to carpentry by his uncle, Ben Burbett, who constructed stairs throughout Eastern Kansas. In 1921 Foglesong moved to Kansas City and started his own carpentry business. He built the Grandview Methodist church, the Terrace Lake (Methodist) church, as well as several other buildings in Jackson County.

### **Restoration of the Truman Farm Home**

At noon on Saturday, May 5, 1984, a dedication ceremony was held, followed by an open house celebrating the farmhouse's public opening. Reverend Jack Pope gave the invocation, Reverend Robert L. Johnson made the introductions, Governor Christopher Bond made some presentations, and State Attorney General John D. Ashcroft made the dedication speech. U.S. Air Force A-10s did a low-level fly-by. The farmhouse remained open Saturday and Sunday, and was then closed to complete the final restoration work and to move period furniture in.<sup>220</sup>

The open house commemorated the dedicated labor of not only George Foglesong, but of many others whose efforts resurrected the farmhouse. When Jackson County acquired the farmhouse and the surrounding 5.3 acres, the house was in serious disrepair. Siding had developed dryrot, roofing had deteriorated, chimneys had been weathered necessitating rebricking, porch footings had deteriorated to the point that they had to be replaced, wallpaper was peeling from ceilings, plaster had been damaged by leaks and had fallen from ceilings, and recent additions had been made to the west facade. The

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<sup>218</sup> Sterling Goddard interviewed by Gail E. H. Evans, 6 June, 2000, transcript of taped interview, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> *Jackson County Advocate*, 3 May 1984.

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*Independence Examiner* described the farm in its September 23, 1983, issue:

The eight-room, two-story house is shabby and neglected. Its paint has peeled off. The bare boards are showing. Its rooms stand empty both of inhabitants and furniture. Only two pines and a walnut remain from the glorious bounty of trees surrounding it half a century ago when a future president of the United States occupied its walls.<sup>221</sup>

They wanted to restore it to what it had been when Truman lived there, including, if possible, outbuildings. They examined historical photographs, retained an archeologist, and hired John A. Huffman, a Kansas City architect specializing in historical renovation work. Huffman inspected the farmhouse and submitted a restoration-reconstruction schedule (see Table 6-1 on the following page).

The archeologist searched the grounds using a piece of remote sensing equipment that would disclose any subsurface anomalies.<sup>222</sup> He found buried foundations, which he investigated by digging exploratory holes and analyzing the artifacts. Seventeen feet east of the house, he discovered a limestone foundation that was constructed using the same material and the same methods that were used on the original 1867 house. His exploratory digs at that location also revealed shards of pottery, pieces of window glass, and other items indicative of a dwelling. He concluded that the small, square building had been a house built either before or contemporaneous with the 1867 house. Further east, he found the remains of a barn that had burned. His exploratory digs revealed obvious evidence of a fire. He found charred wood, and metal pieces discolored red by intense heat. He also found not one square nail, only wire nails.

Because wire nails post-date c. 1900, the archeologist concluded that, contrary to popular belief, the barn that burned was not the barn Solomon Young built in 1868. Testimonial evidence, however, given by Truman family members, as well as historical photographs, support the conclusion that the barn that

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<sup>221</sup> *Independence Examiner*, 23 September 1983.

<sup>222</sup> The device used by the archeologist was a "Probe." The probe is made of steel measuring about 5/8" in diameter and about 3'6" in length with a welded T-bar handle at the top. The bottom end of the probe is tapered and hollowed into a small concavity enabling it to extract traces of brick, shells, or soils into which it is thrust. With experience, it is possible to know what type of material the probe is encountering (brick wall, a layer of oyster shells, sand, etc.) by feel alone without having to extract the probe and examine the sample the hollowed end of the probe has captured. Ivor Noel Hume, *Historical Archaeology*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969).

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burned was the original barn that had been built by Solomon Young in 1867-68. Both Gilbert and Harry Truman, sons of Vivian Truman, identified the burned barn as the original barn. Maxine Williams, who resided in the farmhouse for many years as a renter, examined a photograph of the original Solomon Young barn and identified it as the barn she saw burn. And, Mary Jane Truman identified the same photograph later viewed by Maxine Williams and reported that it was the barn her Grandfather Young had built.

As is frequently the case where conflicting evidence exists, the most correct answer is probably the one that can support both hypotheses. In this case, the most probable answer is that it was Solomon Young's barn that burned in 1966, but that barn had been modified subsequent to 1900. This would explain why the archeologist found the round, or wire nails. In fact, Gilbert and Harry Truman reported that the old original barn had been modified a couple of times.

Not far south of the site of the burned barn, the archeologist found another foundation. This second barn foundation was constructed using the same materials and methods as those that were used on the original 1867 house. Based upon that evidence, the archeologist concluded that the original barn had been located at this second site. He also concluded that the barn that occupied this second site had not burned. However, again the archeologist's conclusions conflict with other, persuasive evidence. Unfortunately, the archeologist did not sink any exploratory holes at the second site to enable him to confirm his theory by analyzing artifacts.<sup>223</sup>



**Master carpenter George Fogelson, left, with Ralph Bray, State Architect for the Missouri Division of Parks and Historical Preservation**

*Photo courtesy of the Jackson County Advocate*

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<sup>223</sup> Robert T. Bray, *Archaeological Survey and Testing at the Truman Farm Home and Grounds, Grandview, Missouri*, typescript, 1983, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

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**PHASE 1 RESTORATION – RECONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE**

	June 1983	July	August	September	October	November	December	January, 1984	February
I. Foundation a. Stabilize and tuckpoint b. Install foundation drains c. Treat for insect and termite infestation									
II. Floor a. Stabilize, restore and level floors and stairways									
III. Roof a. Reinforce rafters and restore roof									
IV. Chimneys a. Plumb, support and tuckpoint b. Repair chimney caps c. Replace deteriorated flashing									
V. Replace broken glass, reconstruct broken sash, and glaze windows									
VI. Restore exterior millwork and siding									
VII. Restore front and side galleries									
VIII. Rewire electrical system to code									
IX. Install security and fire alarm systems									
X. Repair lath and patch plaster									
XI. Caulk and paint exterior									
XII. Finish and furnish interior									

**Table 6.1 Tentative Restoration Schedule Prepared by Project Architect**

Courtesy of the Truman Farm Home Foundation

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Renovation work was begun in the fall of 1983 under the direction of master carpenter George Fogelsong; the deadline for completion was May of 1984. Fogelsong carefully examined photographs taken during Harry Truman's tenure on the farm. Most of the photos were snapshots of family and friends, but the house was in the background. Trim painting, fixtures, doors, porches, siding, and windows were revealed by close scrutiny of the house in the background of these pictures.

Fogelsong encased the entire two-story structure in scaffolding and started a major rebirthing process. He stripped the roof of four separate layers of roofing to lay the new roof. He assumed that the last layer of roofing he removed was probably

the first roof to have been installed. He duplicated its cedar wood shakes. The porch on the west side of the house was removed and replaced. Plaster was removed and replaced with new. Dry-rotted siding had to be removed and duplicated.

Attempts were even made to duplicate the wallpaper. In June of 1999, the National Park



**George Fogelsong, the master carpenter who directed the restoration carpentry work.**

*Photo courtesy of the Jackson County Advocate*

Service received a cardboard box labeled, "Harry Truman Farm Home Old Wallpaper." The box contained samples of wallpaper from five rooms in the farm home. The samples had been missing for five years. The box had ended up in the attic of Ruby Jane Hall, a Truman family friend who died in January of 1999.

Relatives found the box while preparing for Hall's estate sale.<sup>224</sup>

Fogelsong, dressed in his usual attire of bib overalls, checkered shirt, baseball cap, heavy-framed tinted glasses, and holding an unlighted pipe, celebrated his 72nd birthday on the

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<sup>224</sup> *Kansas City Star*, 29 June 1999.

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Truman job. During an April, 1984, interview with Joseph Turnbaugh of the *Jackson County Advocate*, Fogelsong stressed that the job wouldn't have been possible if it were not for the hundreds of hours donated by many skilled craftsmen from several area labor unions.<sup>225</sup> By some accounts, close to \$31,000 was donated in labor and materials during the renovation.<sup>226</sup>

Attendees of the May, 1984, dedication ceremony not only admired a reborn Young-Truman farmhouse, they drove past a new grove of sugar maple trees to get to the house. The last of the maple trees that Solomon and his daughter, Martha Ellen (future mother of the president) had planted c. 1869 blew down in the late 1950s. The area immediately west of the farmhouse, between the front of the house and the public-access highway, where once the maples stood, was barren when restoration commenced. The land looked like the remnants of a pasture.

The young women of Girl Scout Senior Troop 510 and Cadet Troop 710 applied for and were awarded one of only twenty-three grants offered nationwide by the Reader's Digest Foundation for community projects. The young women completed their historical research, and then coordinated with the Farm Home Foundation, Jackson County Parks and Recreation, and the project architect. By May the young women had planted twenty ten-foot high sugar maple trees, restoring Solomon's grove.<sup>227</sup>

Toward the end of 1984, it became obvious that the Farm Home Foundation lacked adequate funds to finally conclude all the restoration. On February 21, 1984, Jackson County entered into an agreement with the foundation under which the county provided the foundation with \$75,000 to finish the work.<sup>228</sup> The final costs, compared to estimated costs are impressive. The comparison is presented in table 6-2 on the following page.

Actual costs for all cost categories, including architectural, and administrative, as well as construction costs were \$28,456 less than what had been expected. The apparent source of this savings is the donation of both labor and materials. For example, Fogelsong Construction Company, alone donated approximately \$31,000 worth of labor to the project.

For the next two years, the foundation attempted to operate and maintain the farmhouse solely from revenue generated by a modest admittance fee. Volunteer docents guided tours four days a week in the summer. Jackson County assumed responsibility for maintaining the surrounding landscaping.

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<sup>225</sup> *Jackson County Advocate*, 3 May 1984.

<sup>226</sup> John A. Huffman, Completion Report, Harry S. Truman Farm Home, September 4, 1984, Historian's Files, Harry S. Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>227</sup> John A. Huffman, Architect, Letter to Kimberly White, Senior Girl Scout, May 8, 1984, Historian's Files, Harry S. Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>228</sup> Vertical Files: "Grandview Farm, Misc." Harry S. Truman Library.

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Although approximately 200 visitors would tour the house on some long weekends, by March of 1986 the foundation found itself \$17,000 in debt and concluded that it would be financially unable to continue maintaining the house appropriately. At its September 17, 1986, Board of Directors meeting, it was reported that the foundation owed six months of back interest (approximately \$687.46), making the amount then owing on their bank loan \$17,525.45.

<u>Task</u>	<u>Originally Estimated Cost</u>	<u>Actual Cost</u>
Clearing and grubbing	\$1,200	\$299
Site improvements	11,120	9,369
Foundation work	6,840	419
Flooring Restoration	8,400	534
Reconstruct roof; insulate attic	7,600	4,595
Reconstruct three chimneys	2,400	1,236
Stabilize one chimney	800	0
Restore galleries	16,800	6,296
Reconstruct kitchen	4,800	7,381
Install mechanical system	8,000	5,446
Rewire electrical system	5,400	9,942
Security and fire alarm system	2,800	2,183
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b><u>\$76,160</u></b>	<b><u>47,704</u></b>

Courtesy of the Truman Farm Home Foundation

**Table 6.2 Expected vs. actual costs**

The board concluded that admission receipts were simply not going to support the farm home. The finance report stated that the foundation had taken in \$1,700 for the year, and interest on their bank note was \$1,200. The minutes of that meeting included: "If this problem isn't resolved, we'll have to shut the property down. There would be no other option except to go to the County and tell them it's theirs - we can't operate it because we can't pay our bills."<sup>229</sup>

The foundation directors then spent the rest of what appears to have been a very long meeting exploring different options to solve the financial problem. A careful reading of the minutes of that meeting leaves the reader with the clear impression that the board adjourned the meeting with a firm resolution to go out and fix the problem.<sup>230</sup>

<sup>229</sup> Minutes, Truman Farm Home Foundation Board of Directors Meeting, September 17, 1986, Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

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In October of 1986, the foundation's Board of Directors voted to ask Jackson County to assume full operation and maintenance of both house and landscaping<sup>231</sup>. Jackson County Legislature agreed in April of 1987. The County budgeted \$6,000 in operating funds, and Grandview City Council added another \$5,000. The county's Heritage Programs and Museums Division of the Parks and Recreation Department assigned one person to the farm home. In addition, one seasonal employee would coordinate volunteers. Training of the new seasonal employee was conducted by the staff of the Harry S Truman National Historic Site. The Truman NHS also agreed to encourage its visitors to also tour the farm home.

In early 1989, it was becoming clear to Jackson County officials that they would not be able to continue maintaining and operating the farm home. Legislature Chairman Fred Arbanas commented that the county didn't have the funding to market it effectively.<sup>232</sup> Arbanas went on to characterize attendance at the farm home as "dismal." According to him, the farm home had 2,800 visitors in 1988, whereas the Truman home in Independence attracted 100,000.<sup>233</sup>

On May 15, 1989, the Jackson County Legislature passed a resolution directing the county executive officer to solicit the assistance of Senator John Danforth, Senator Christopher Bond and Congressman Alan Wheat in an attempt to have the National Park Service assume fiscal and operational responsibilities of the Truman Farm Home. In mid-1990, Senator John Danforth requested that the National Park Service (NPS) assess the possibilities for enhancing the interpretation of Truman's life and times, and prepare a report examining management options which might facilitate that enhancement.

Although no specific congressional directive was enacted either through specific authorizing legislation or as supplemental language in an appropriations act (which are normally the procedural mechanisms by which NPS initiates a new area study), NPS expressed a willingness to examine management options for the farm home. The new area study examining the farmhouse was substantially simplified because it had been designated a National Historic Landmark in February of 1985. Therefore, the first portion of the two-part area study (i.e., determination of the resource's national significance) was unnecessary. Ronald J. Mack, Superintendent of the Harry S Truman National Historic Site, responded on October 18, 1990. He submitted a draft, "Alternatives for the Management of the Truman Farm." The study was completed by the staff of the Harry S Truman National

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<sup>231</sup> Sterling Goddard interview, 6 June, 2000.

<sup>232</sup> *The Kansas City Times*, 13 May 1989.

<sup>233</sup> *The Kansas City Times*, 13 May 1989.



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Historic Site, who consulted with representatives of the Jackson County Parks and Recreation Department, the Jackson County Legislature, the Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, and the Harry S Truman Farm Home Foundation.<sup>234</sup> The October report assessed six management alternatives, including various combinations of ownership and management of the Farm Home (e.g., continued ownership and management by Jackson County; continued ownership by Jackson County, but management by NPS; ownership and management by NPS, etc.). The report did not include conclusions or recommendations; it was intended only to "develop several options for managing, preserving, and using the site and its resources."<sup>235</sup> (It was National Park Service policy to avoid identifying a management preference in new area study reports. The Park Service would proffer a position only upon congressional consideration of legislation, which could result in federal protection of the resource.) The report presented four management objectives:

1. To restore and refurbish the historic farm home;
2. To preserve the home, furnishings, and grounds;
3. To provide accessibility to the public; and
4. To interpret the story of Harry Truman's farm experience and of the Truman family's influence on the President.<sup>236</sup>

The NPS report also presented an excellent, succinct description of the farmhouse as it appears today:

The Truman Farm Home is a two-story, three-bay, irregularly T-shaped vernacular farm residence. The home, recently restored to its early twentieth century appearance, is comprised of three rectangular sections. The front (west) section has a north-south axis; the middle section has an east-west axis and is attached perpendicular to the front section's east side; the small third section is attached immediately east of the center section. A roughly twenty-seven-by six-foot, three-bay porch graces the main facade; a seven-foot, six-inch by

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<sup>234</sup> The Harry S Truman National Historic Site staff who conducted this study included: Palma Wilson, Chief Ranger; Carol Dage, Chief of Cultural Resource Management; Mike Healy, Facility Management Specialist; Joan Sanders, Administrative Technician; and Constance Odom-Soper, Museum Aid. The study was initiated by Superintendent Norman Reigle. Following his transfer, responsibility for the project was assigned to Jill York O'Bright, Midwest Regional Historian, National Park Service.

<sup>235</sup> Ronald J. Mack, Superintendent, Harry S Truman National Historic Site to the Honorable John C. Danforth, US Senate, October 18, 1990, Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

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fourteen-foot, six-inch porch is situated on the south elevation at the crux of the front and center sections. The house measures forty-four feet east-to-west without the porch and thirty-six feet, six inches north-to-south at its widest points. It includes approximately 1,900 square feet of living space.

The frame structure has clapboard siding, painted white. The trim is dark green. The west section rests on a brick foundation; stone and brick masonry foundations support the other sections. The west section has a hipped roof, as does the front porch. The other sections have gabled roofs.

#### **Acquisition by the National Park Service**

The National Park Service was widely thought to be the best agency to assume responsibility for the farmhouse and site. However, the Park Service expressed reluctance to assume that control. When Representative Alan Wheat, a Kansas City Democrat, introduced a bill into the House of Representatives that would require the Park Service to assume control of the farmhouse, James Stewart, assistant director of planning for the Park Service, testified before a congressional committee that, "It was the plowing of soil, sowing of seed and milking of cows that were important to Truman's development. That cannot be recaptured on a 5.2 acre parcel of land."<sup>237</sup>

Senate Bill 2956 was introduced by Senators Bond and Danforth during the 102d Congress. It authorized the Secretary of the Interior to acquire by donation the Truman Farm Home. Unfortunately, the Senate National Parks Subcommittee didn't get around to placing the bill on their calendar, so it died; and the United States, at that time, did not have a president willing to call a special session of Congress.

The 103rd Congress got a little more done. Senator Bond again introduced a bill that would empower the Secretary of the Interior to accept donation of the farm. A hearing was held on Senate Bill 845 before the Subcommittee on Public Lands, National Parks and Forests of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Senator Bond introduced the bill and advocated for its passage. Written testimony was submitted from David McCullough, author of *Truman*, as well as historians Robert Donovan and Robert H. Ferrell. Jerry L. Rogers, Associate Director of the National Park Service, reported that, "the Administration has decided to support enactment of S. 845. . . We estimate the recurring cost for operating and maintaining the

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<sup>237</sup> *Kansas City Star*, 10 May 1992.

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property to be from \$150,000 to \$250,000 per year; and this does not include the cost of any future repair or reconstruction that may be necessary."<sup>238</sup> Robert Eller, President of the Friends of the Truman Farm Home Foundation also attended the subcommittee hearings and testified.

Congress finally passed, and President Clinton signed legislation allowing the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, to accept the donation of the farm home. The Jackson County Legislature on March 21, 1994, enacted Resolution 10242, which authorized the county executive to donate the farm home to the United States. On April 4, 1994, Jackson County conveyed, by quit-claim deed, the farm home to the United States; the deed was filed on April 15.<sup>239</sup>

The farmhouse today is as it was when Mary Jane trekked between smoke house, garden and kitchen; Mamma Truman gently rocked in the sitting room, reading history; and a young dirt farmer cultivated the corn field north of the house.

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<sup>238</sup> Minutes, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Public Lands, National Parks and Forests, US Senate, 103d Congress, First Session, July 29, 1993.

<sup>239</sup> Vertical File: "Truman Farm," Harry S. Truman Library.

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